

Business parks get commuter designation

Two of the East Bay's biggest employment centers, Hacienda Business Park in Pleasanton and Bishop Ranch Business Park in San Ramon, have been designated Best Workplaces for Commuters Districts.

As the first such "districts" in California and among only six nationwide, officials of the business parks are being recognized for their efforts to promote use of public transit, carpools, vanpools and other methods of alternative transportation among employees.

With 375 companies, Hacienda has about 17,500 people working on its sprawling north Pleasanton site, which includes a residential population of 3,500 people living in 1,550 units of housing. Bishop Ranch, which covers 585 acres straddling Interstate 680 in San Ramon, has about 30,000 employees working at 350 companies.

Officials of the national Best Workplaces for Commuters organization, a program operated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, say one of the biggest reasons for the business parks' success in this area is because commuter benefits are offered by developers and property managers of the developments rather than just individual employers.

"Hacienda Business Park has been actively involved in providing true commuter choices to our tenants for more than 20 years," said James Paxson, park general manager. "Our programs seek to actively incorporate a variety of alternatives into the design and operation of Hacienda as we realize that these programs are necessary to meet the needs of today's workforce."

Robin Snyder, national program manager for the EPA, put a dollar value of the alternative commute programs.

"By offering commuter benefits, an organization with 1,000 employees can save its employees \$13,000 in taxes and \$160,000 in gas, parking and vehicles costs each year," she said.

Marci McGuire, transportation program manager of Bishop Ranch, said the district designation "will help to maintain and increase the momentum of our program on several different levels, as well as provide a valuable, unbiased and easily identifiable set of standards for measurement internally and externally."